

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS BANGKOK 004367

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV TH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND: PARLIAMENT AMENDS CONSTITUTION; CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OF BAGGAGE SCANNER DEAL LAUNCHED

REF: A. BANGKOK 3635

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 4238

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: The Thai Parliament approved a constitutional amendment revising the method for selecting the nation's National Counter Corruption Commission, the nation's chief independent corruption monitor. Based on petitions filed by members of the opposition Democrat Party, the Office of the Attorney General opened an official criminal probe into a controversial baggage scanner deal that was the focus of an unsuccessful censure motion against the Minister of Transportation last week. Opinion polls show a modest drop in public confidence in the Thai economy and the ruling government's job rating. END SUMMARY.

#### CORRUPTION COMMISSION SELECTION PROCESS CHANGED

[1](#)2. (U) On July 1, a joint session of Thailand's Parliament, which consists of the 500 seat House of Representatives and the 200-seat Senate, voted to amend the constitution by a vote of 484 to 156 with 23 abstentions (35 members were absent and there are 2 vacancies). Passed on its third reading, the bill amends Article 297 by changing the membership of the selection committee formed to select members of the National Counter Corruption Commission (NCCC), one of 5 independent organizations established by the 1997 constitution. The current 9 members of the NCCC were forced to resign in May after the Supreme Court for Political Persons found them guilty of malfeasance for raising their pay allowances (Reftel A). The original Article 297 stipulated that members of 5 political parties, 4 of which now exist, could be chosen to the selection panel. The amendment changes that to one representative each of the ruling government and one from the opposition side, without stipulating the party names. Other panel members include: the presidents (or Chief Justices) of the Administrative, Supreme and Constitutional courts, the Election Commission chairman, the Auditor General, the National Human Rights Commission chairman, one of the three official government Ombudsmen, and six university rectors. The amendment will be sent to King Bhumibol for his approval and then published in the Royal Gazette.

[1](#)3. (U) All of the opposition Members of the House of Representatives, both the Democrat Party (DP) and Chart Thai Party (CT), voted against the amendment, claiming that their own proposed constitutional amendment, which was blocked from discussion of the joint session in committee, eliminated political party representatives from the selection committee.

#### CTX SCANNER CONTROVERSY NOT OVER

[1](#)4. (U) Meanwhile, the Office of the Attorney General (AG) announced the formation of a panel to oversee the criminal investigation of the controversial baggage scanner deal at Bangkok's new international airport. The OAG has assigned the Crime Suppression Division (CSD) of the Royal Thai Police (RTP) with looking into allegations that bribes were paid by a Thai contractors, hired by the US company InVision, to secure a deal to sell scanners for baggage at the as yet unopened airport in the eastern suburbs of Bangkok. The investigation is based on complaints filed by DP Members of Parliament. The commander of the RTP's Central Investigation Bureau, which works with the CSD, stated to the media last week that he would assign 30 officers to the case.

#### PUBLIC CONFIDENCE DROPS SLIGHTLY BUT THAI RAK THAI STILL POPULAR

[1](#)5. (U) Opinion polls released since the end of the unsuccessful censure debate against Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungreat (Reftel B), indicate public confidence in the economy dropped in June. A Suan Dusit Ratchaphak Institute poll using 100 as a mean standard of confidence, polled 5,771 people during the last week of June, and calculated an 89.97 confidence rating, compared with 100.13 in May. However, the government's overall performance rating dropped only 5.78 points, from 108.67 to 102.89. A separate poll showed that over 55% of respondents still favored the Thai Rak Thai party over the Democrats.

